

## David the King 4 - Choose Love

### 1. A great love.

Although we are in a series of messages from the life of David, this sermon is only marginally about David. The main figures we will be looking at are King Saul and his son Jonathan. At this point in David's life trouble is still brewing at the king's court. Goliath has been killed and now David is gaining in popularity, or with ignominy, depending on your point of view. After talking with Saul about the battle, Jonathan developed a great admiration for David and "loved him as his own soul."

1Sam 18:1-4 And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.

2And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house.

3Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.

4And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that *was* upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.

Jonathan's great appreciation for David was demonstrated when he gave him his robe, garments, even his own sword, bow, and battle belt. When my brothers talk about how our father we fondly remember how we each have various tools from him. The tools are like sacred objects to us. I think of him every time I use the table saw that he used to build the house I grew up in. I haven't been tempted to get anything fancier than that. I think each of us have one of Dad's trowels. I even have tools that he passed on from my *great* grandfather. There are tools that I have passed on to my sons-in-law that they have reverently received. Don't lightly read that verse. Jonathan, a great man of war, did no small thing by giving him these weapons.

So many times people say that they love somebody, but what they really mean is that they like them a lot and that they will really enjoy how much a blessing that person is going to be to them. Many times love is nothing more than a selfish expression that says I love myself, and want the best for myself, and I see you as someone who can meet my needs. And, what they really mean by needs is their desires. If Jonathan's love for David was truly like the love that he had for his own soul, then it would stand the test of time and pressure. Jonathan presents probably the greatest example of love in the Bible. God has put him into this history for just this moment to demonstrate a great lesson of love. Romantic stories are great, but this is

greater than any romantic story. When Jonathan died in battle, this was the eulogy that David spoke for him:

2Sam 1:25-26 How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! O Jonathan, *thou wast* slain in thine high places.

26I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.

Not only did Jonathan develop a great admiration for David, but so did the people. David was a handsome national hero.

1Sam 18:5-7 And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, *and* behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants.

6And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of musick.

7And the women answered *one another* as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.

They did what people commonly do, they made songs about him. Notable people have had ballads and songs written about them forever. Songs that people make up about celebrities and politicians pop up all over the internet. The people came out to sing in honor of Saul, but they showed how popular David was growing on them. They sang about how Saul had killed his thousands, but David his *ten* thousands. Of course, David had only killed Goliath at this point, but saying ten thousands reflected the opinion they had of David. It doesn't take much to predict how this was going to affect Saul.

1Sam 18:8-11 And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed *but* thousands: and *what* can he have more but the kingdom?

9And Saul eyed David from that day and forward.

10And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit [or, a troubling spirit] from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house: and David played with his hand, as at other times: and *there was* a javelin in Saul's hand.

11And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall *with it*. And David avoided out of his presence twice.

This is the first inkling Saul had that David was his competition. The Bible says that Saul set a snare, or a trap, for David, using the promise of marriage to his daughter. David succeeded in the challenge and Saul's daughter fell in love with David.

1Sam 18:28-30 And Saul saw and knew that the LORD *was* with David, and *that* Michal Saul's daughter loved him.

29And Saul was yet the more afraid of David; and Saul became David's enemy continually.

30Then the princes of the Philistines went forth: and it came to pass, after they went forth, *that* David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul; so that his name was much set by.

In addition to all of this, David became even *more* popular with the people.

David did nothing different at any time. He went to battle, he succeeded, he supported Saul...the same man inspired both love and hate.

This process repeats itself several more times. I personally think throwing javelins at me would serve as a clue of how someone felt about me, but Jonathan is so impressed with David that he can't imagine that anyone, including his father, could truly hate David. So David and Jonathan devised a test to reveal Saul's true intentions. Jonathan went up to a feast where David would be conspicuously absent. When Jonathan made excuse for David, Saul revealed that he knew that David was the one to replace him.

1Sam 20:30-34 Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said unto him, Thou son of the perverse rebellious *woman*, do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion, and unto the confusion of thy mother's nakedness?

31For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom. Wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die.

32And Jonathan answered Saul his father, and said unto him, Wherefore shall he be slain? what hath he done?

33And Saul cast a javelin at him to smite him: whereby Jonathan knew that it was determined of his father to slay David.

34So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and did eat no meat the second day of the month: for he was grieved for David, because his father had done him shame.

## 2. Choose love.

David was not only a threat to the throne of Saul, he was also a threat to the throne of Jonathan, and Jonathan was well aware of it. We can see this in 1 Samuel 20. Before he went to test his father, he revealed that he knew that David was destined to the throne. Remember that since Jonathan was Saul's son, it was expected that *he* was the one who should succeed Saul as king. Jonathan had everything to lose, but his love for David was so great that it didn't matter to him. He actually *wanted* David to be the king.

1Sam 20:14-17 And thou shalt not only while yet I live shew me the kindness of the LORD, that I die not:

15But *also* thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever: no, not when the LORD hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth.

16So Jonathan made *a covenant* with the house of David, *saying*, Let the LORD even require *it* at the hand of David's enemies.

17And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul.

Jonathan wanted the assurance that David would be kind to him and his memory when he took his place on the throne of Israel. Jonathan chose to love David in spite of this "threat." Saul saw the same threat and chose to hate David. Here the story focuses on a comparison between Jonathan and Saul. Each one has the same relationship to David, but their reactions to David were opposite. If their reaction to David was a matter of logic one had just as much a reason to hate David as the other, and one had as much reason to love David as the other.

It couldn't be said that Jonathan loved David in spite of any offense that David had committed against him. This certainly would have been admirable to love David anyway. However, the fact that David had done nothing abhorrent and behaved himself admirably only highlights the aspect of irrationality in this situation. There is nothing that could be tied to David. He was a threat *in spite* of his goodness. The threat could only be in the minds of Saul and Jonathan.

We like to emphasize the importance of the rational over the emotional. The rational recognizes *who* to love, but it never argues *why* to love. Love itself is irrational. It is a choice. Their different

reactions were not dictated by logic, they were based on a willful choice. It is not that we dismiss the rational, but after all is said and done: we emotionally commit ourselves, we exercise our will, we buy into the option to love. One chose love, the other chose hate. Saul could have chosen to love David just as much as Jonathan did. Make no mistake about it, Saul was willfully hateful. he could have done the same thing as Jonathan.

These two responses, Jonathan's love and Saul's hate, have been placed side by side in the Bible for a very specific reason. This happens in a number of places in the Bible to demonstrate how you can take the same circumstances but that the response you have is not determined by the circumstances. Our response is *our* choice.

Love is not an emotion. It is emotional in that it is an exercise of the will, but it is not a feeling. It is a willful choice. We choose to love. There is a popular notion in the world that you can't help who you love. Of course the world is thinking only about physical lust. We actually *can* help who we love...we can choose to love *everyone*. Years ago, *Love Story* was a popular movie featuring Ryan O'Neal where the movie ends with the line "Love means never having to say you're sorry." It was a tear jerker of a movie and has been criticized for suggesting that apologies are not necessary in a loving relationship, which would lead the way for people to walk all over each other and not resolving problems. You could beat your spouse and walk away saying, "Don't expect me to apologize." In a later comedy film where Barbara Streisand turns the life of Ryan O'Neal upside down, the movie also closes this time with Streisand delivering the line, "Love means never having to say you're sorry," as if she shouldn't have to apologize for anything she had put him through. O'Neal looks at her and says, "That's the dumbest thing I ever heard." It is not only the dumbest thing, it is anti-Scripture.

Jas 5:16 Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

What *does* love mean? It means consistently wanting the best for someone else. It doesn't mean appeasing someone else. It doesn't mean reinforcing their lust and immaturity by giving them whatever they want. It means putting the turnips in the mashed potatoes because it's good for you (that's what my mother did). It means calling them out on their sin so they can escape the snare of the devil. It means supporting them in their efforts to Godliness. It means sacrificing self for the eternal benefit of others.

3. No greater love.

This kind of love is most demonstrated by Jesus Christ.

John 15:12-13 This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

13Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

We are most familiar with vs. 13. Jesus demonstrated the greatest love for us.

Rom 5:8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

While we were yet sinners points to the fact that God loved us even though there was no earthly reason to show us any favor. He loved us in spite of our sinfulness. And then He died for us.

But then, before John 15:13 where Jesus pointed out that no man has greater love than to die for someone else, He says in vs. 12 that we should love one another as *He* loved.

1John 3:16 Hereby perceive we the love *of God*, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren.

We are to give our lives for the brethren. In John 10:18 we are told that the giving of His life was entirely His choice.

John 10:18 No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

The sacrifice of self for the benefit of others is to be our choice to make.

Rom 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service.

2And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

1. A great love. 1Sam 18:1-434
2. Choose love. 1Sam 20:14-17, Jas 5:16
3. No greater love. John 15:12-13, Rom 5:8, 1John 3:16, John 10:18, Rom 12:1-2